

IN THE CLAIMS:

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1. (Currently amended) A method for dynamically selecting a firewall server for a web client, in particular a web browser, in a Transmission Control Protocol/Internet Protocol (TCP/IP) network comprising a plurality of firewall servers, said method comprising the steps of:

measuring performance and availability of each firewall server using measurement probes[; and]], wherein the step of measuring the performance and availability of each firewall server using measurement probes comprises the further step of measuring the response time needed for retrieving from a web server known information, in particular one or a plurality of known web pages, through each firewall server and wherein the step of measuring the response time comprises the further steps of:

establishing a connection with the web server through each firewall server;

retrieving the one or a plurality of known web pages from the web server;

and

checking that the retrieved one or plurality of web pages contain one or a plurality of known keywords; and

dynamically selecting a firewall server according to the performance and availability measurements.

2. (Canceled)
3. (Canceled)
4. (Currently amended) The method according to claim 1 [[or 3]] wherein the step of measuring the performance of each firewall server using measurement probes comprises the further step of:
- comparing each firewall server said measured response time with previous measured response times; and,

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determining for each firewall the degradation or the amelioration of the measured response time.

5. (Currently amended) The method according to claim 1 [[or 3]] wherein the step of measuring the availability of each firewall server using measurement probes comprises the further step of:
 - detecting failures on each firewall server; and,
 - excluding firewall servers in failure from the step of selecting a firewall server.
6. (Currently amended) The method according to claim 1 [[or 3]] wherein said firewall server is a proxy server or a socks server.
7. (Currently amended) The method according to claim 1 [[or 3]] comprising the further steps of:
 - processing performance and availability measurements from a single universal resource locator (URL) system; and,
 - dynamically creating a configuration file based on the performance and availability measurements, preferably in the Javascript language, on said universal resource locator (URL) system for selecting said firewall server.
8. (Currently amended) The method according to claim [[1 or 3]] 7 wherein the step of dynamically creating a configuration file is processed by a common gateway interface (CGI) on said universal resource locator (URL) system.
9. (Currently amended) The method according to claim[[s]] 1 [[or 3]] wherein the step of selecting a firewall server comprises the further step of downloading the configuration file from [[the]] a universal resource locator (URL) system web browser.

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10. (Currently amended) The method according to claim [[1 or 3]] 2 wherein the steps of measuring performance and availability and of dynamically selecting a firewall server are periodically processed in the universal resource locator (URL) system and the configuration file created by the common gateway interface (CGI) is periodically downloaded to the web client.
11. (Currently amended) The method according to claim 1 [[or 3]] comprising the further steps of:
- pre-selecting a backup firewall server in a background process; and,
 - switching to said backup firewall server in case of failure of the selected firewall server.
12. (Currently amended) The method according to claim 1 [[or 3]] wherein the step of selecting a firewall server according to performance and availability measurements comprises the further step of selecting the firewall server according to the Internet Protocol (IP) address of the web browser.
13. (Canceled)
14. (Currently amended) A program product for dynamically selecting a firewall server for a web client, in particular a web browser, in a Transmission Control Protocol/Internet Protocol (TCP/IP) network comprising a plurality of firewall servers, said program product comprising the steps of:
- programmatically measuring performance and availability of each firewall server using measurement probes[; and], wherein the step of programmatically measuring the performance and availability of each firewall server using measurement probes comprises the further step of programmatically measuring the response time needed for retrieving from a web server known information, in particular one or a plurality of known web pages, through each firewall server and wherein the step of programmatically measuring the response time comprises the further steps of:

programmatically establishing a connection with the web server through each firewall server;

programmatically retrieving the one or a plurality of known web pages from the web server; and

programmatically checking that the retrieved one or plurality of web pages contain one or a plurality of known keywords; and

dynamically, using programmatic means, selecting a firewall server according to the performance and availability measurements.

15. (Canceled)
16. (Canceled)
17. (Currently amended) The program product according to claim 14 [[or 16]] wherein the step of measuring the performance of each firewall server using measurement probes comprises the further step of:
- programmatically comparing each firewall server said measured response time with previous measured response times; and,
 - programmatically determining for each firewall the degradation or the amelioration of the measured response time.
18. (Currently amended) The program product according to claim 14 [[or 16]] wherein the step of measuring the availability of each firewall server using measurement probes comprises the further step of:
- programmatically detecting failures on each firewall server; and,
 - programmatically excluding firewall servers in failure from the step of selecting a firewall server.
19. (Currently amended) The program product according to claim 14 [[or 16]] wherein said firewall server is a proxy server or a socks server.